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Ripple Brook
Niagara Falls

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LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

Hopeset and Sunrise	Southern Bivouac
Our Nation's Dead	United Service
Eden-Blossom	Good Housekeeping
The Realms of Sleep	Ill. Chris. Weekly
The Measure of a Man	Boston Pilot
The New Papa	Babyhood
Florence May	Our Little Ones
Revery-Time	Chris. Register
Legitimate Fruit	Arthur's Home Mag.
April	Godey's
The Compass	Demarest's
A City of Nests	Cottage Hearth
The Valley of Rest	The Household
Milton	Literary Life
Washington Monument : An Ode	Wash. Chronicle
Niagara Falls	Brooklyn Mag.

RIPPLE BROOK
NIAGARA FALLS

Two Poems

BY

JASPER BARNETT COWDIN

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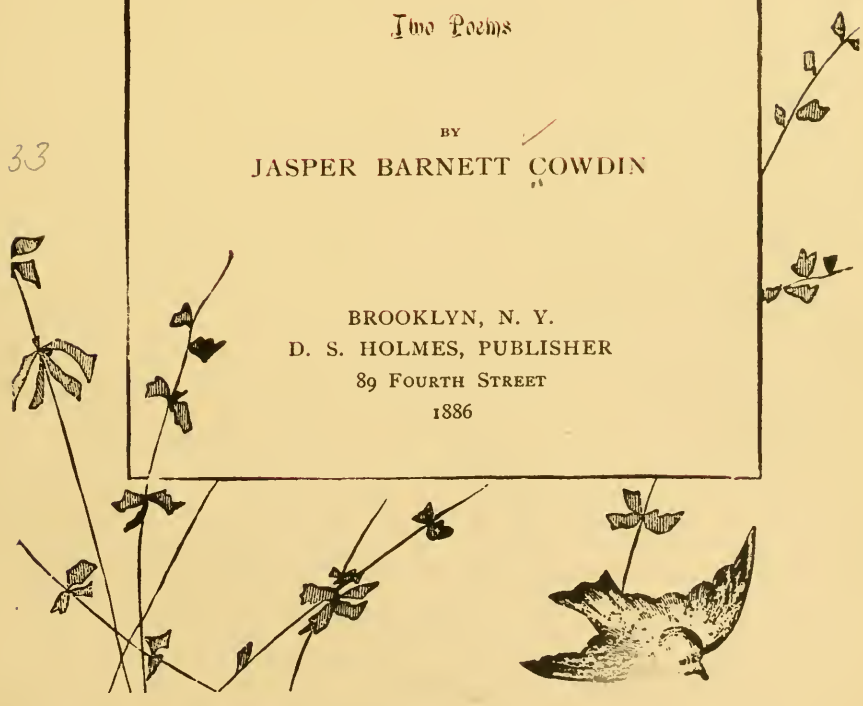

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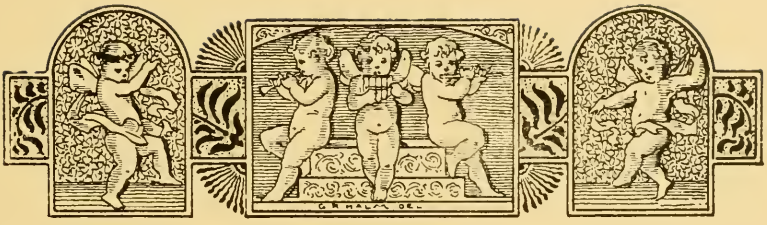
THE name, fame and trumpet of no great literary figure being called into requisition, these children of song (twins, yet not alike) must go forth unannounced, in the hope of attracting a few listeners to one who believes he has something to sing about, and is anxious to do it in the best manner. Quality before quantity is the aim of the author ; yet his portfolio is not exhausted by these specimens, and a larger volume would be the result of sufficient encouragement.

RIPPLE BROOK.



RIPPLE BROOK.

Yes, I dimple, dimple, dimple,
Ripple, ripple, ripple,
Where the drooping woods may stipple
On my breast the shadow-play
Of the light leaves in flutter,
Vainly trying to re-utter
My sweet ditty. How they mutter
As I laugh and whirl away!

Our quaint little niece, Miss Wren,
Visits me oft in the glen,
Dabbling with jaunty grace
In her one familiar place,
Where I run my liveliest race,
Chiming past roots and rocks.
Sir Robin calls me a chatterbox;
But I am the favorite brook
With all wise little birds; each nook
They know, and their wings they cool
With the silver drops of yon pool.

Woods green from April's visit,
Filled with the breath exquisite
Of grasses rare, I love :
I am the glass they bend above ;
Lilac and daisy-star,
I show them what they are,
A beautiful meek sisterhood,
The quietest tenants of this wood.
Ambitious to become a flower,
Along my banks at every hour
Some bud is born, whose hiding shy
Is found out by a butterfly.
When summer fills the meadows wide
The soft winds push the boughs aside
To let the sun look in at me
And hearken to my melody.
Soon am I coaxed from my retreat
To thread his lanes of rich brown wheat.

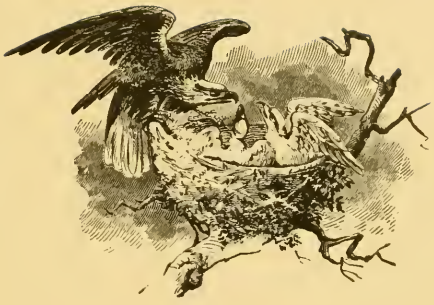
Indeed, all pleasant things I know
Point out so many ways to go,—

I must dimple, dimple, dimple,
Ripple, ripple, ripple,
Where the drooping woods may stipple
On my breast the shadow-play
Of the light leaves in flutter,
Vainly trying to re-utter
My sweet ditty. How they mutter
As I chatter and patter away!

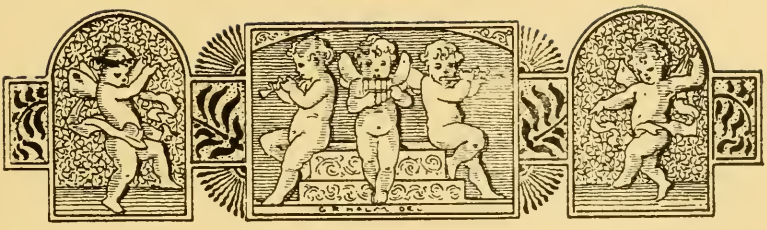
The crickets chant their lone delights
Around me in still August nights,
When all along my leafy turns
The firefly's golden atom burns.
Then comes to drink my dainty pet
The wild deer: like a statuette
He stands, until some meteor's flight
Lightens the whole wide face of night
With sudden flash; swift off he bounds,
His delicate feet making light sounds.
All night upon my trembling breast
I rock the baby-stars to rest:
They leave me when the sunbeams yearn
To frolic with me in their turn.

The white-clad months which lie between
October's gold and April's green
Hang chains of silver all along
My sylvan curves, and hush my song.
Winter starlight, cold and keen,
Makes bright the palace I am in ;
Yet chiefly do I love the spring,
For then my voice is free to sing.
The birds have no philosophy
To make them happy, neither I ;
Whatever good I may be bringing,
I think I was simply made for singing.

So I dimple, dimple, dimple,
Ripple, ripple, ripple,
Where the drooping woods may stipple
On my breast the shadow-play
Of the light leaves in flutter,
Vainly trying to re-utter
My sweet ditty. How they mutter
As I laugh and whirl away !



NIAGARA FALLS.



NIAGARA FALLS.

I.

Solemnly, slowly, the vast weight of falling
Waters the voice of a spirit immortal
Drowns,—and he stands, as a Heaven's great portal,
Humbled in sight of his low earthly calling.
Man hath no glory here;
Watching in silence thy soul-waking wonder,
O Niagara!—hearing thy thunder,
Pride must not come near.

II.

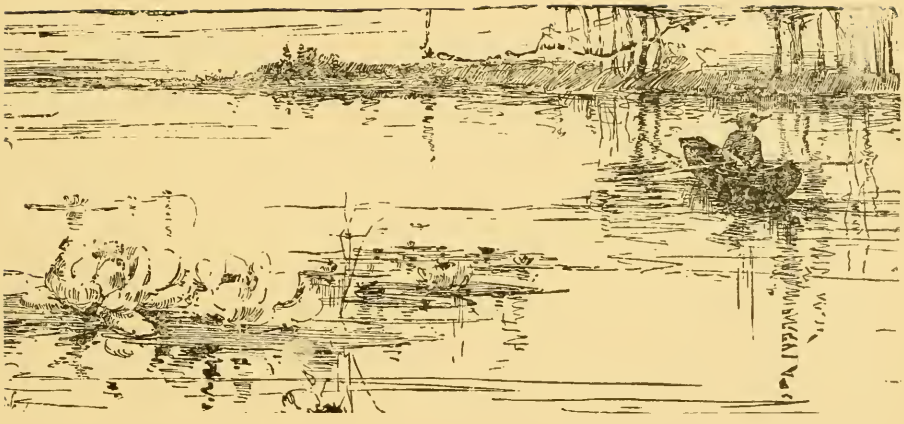
Daily the magical gold incandescent
Sun makes thee glimmer, a gold-falling shower ;
Nightly the silver-clad moon tries *her* power,
Changing thy dense rain of gems to liquescent
Moonlight, that sparkling falls
In goblets upheld by spray-queens at revel,
Who shout with delight at the white downheaval
On their frail mist halls.

III.

At the first shadowy dawn, when an angel
Looked from the shadow-land first on earth's glory,
Eager to tell thy magnificent story,
Thou had'st already begun thine evangel.
Sheer from the cliff, half mist,
Thy waters leapt with the lightness of passion—
Leapt to the lake, and in amorous fashion
Its blue bosom kissed.

IV.

They saw the experiment trial of sunrise
Waken the young, dewy lids of the morning;
Witnessed the sun's rude attempt at adorning
His western cloud-canopy, taught by the One wise,
Great Artist in color;
Saw the strange moon look down in white wonder,
While, through the night watches, rolled the deep thunder
Richer and fuller.



V.

Time from his cradle-song went to the reaping;—
Onward the centuries roll to their falling
Into Oblivion's deep. Yet appalling
As ever, thy power, its wild youth keeping,
Thunder and smoke downpours!—
Far from Ontario, recreant wooer!
But sending thy voice and white kisses to her
Through thy sculptured shores.

VI.

Who were the mystical sons of creation
First to discover, bow down and adore thee,
Long ere the Indian, awe-struck before thee,
Heard from the tall rock thy weird incantation?
Monstrous forms of wild life
Came from the deep savage forest to listen;
Fearless gray eagles, with wings all a-glisten,
Plunged amid thy strife!

VII.

Vanished the Mound Builders, leaving dim traces
Of their past glory ; the Indian faded—
His long-fallen armies slumber degraded
Along thy murmuring shores—and weird faces
Rapid Fancy can see,
Countless and brown as the leaves of November ;
Mingled they lie with the mammal's white member
And fossil of tree.

VIII.

Chant of the cataract, never out-dying,
Voice like the Deathless One, constantly sending
Music far down the dim canyon, soft blending
With dreams of the dead in the vale low-lying—
Grown accustomed to hear
Thy soothing lullaby through the long ages,
The thrilled cyclopean forms of old sages
Lend a throbbing ear.

IX.

Should thy wild avalanche pause for a season,
Dim crowding faces would start up from slumber.
Out from long galleries look without number,
Anxiously look up the gorge for the reason
Of this, their strange unrest;
Wondering at the dead silence around them,
Grumbling at the rude shock which unbound them
And left them unblest.

X.

Dies not thy deafening peal of divineness,
Till the dread trumpeter from his high station
Calls for the curtain of black desolation
To cover the world and its tragical finis
In the night-hush of death.
Dread the solemnity, then, of all regions,
The world-drama ended, its skeleton legions
Sleeping without breath.

XI.

Now is thy triumph-hour, crescent of madness!
Sweeping terrific in lofty descension
Down on my weak speck of humbled pretension,
Crushed like a swallow and drowned in thy gladness,
Lost under mightiest wave!—
Struggling yet bravely to keep my immortal
Spark in full sight, lest I faint at the portal
Of my vanquished grave.

XII.

Frail my mortality looks in thy presence ;
Yet, if I deemed that the God of all glory
Cared more for thee and thy wonderful story
Than for my handful of dust, all my pleasance
With Him would be at jar.
Off and away with the sorrowful presage !
The Man-God whispers within me this message :
"Thou art dearer far."

XIII.

At the euthanasy-hour of creation
Thou shalt behold the last picture unfolden,
The sun's masterpiece on his cloud-canvas golden,
His last grand splendor of gold and carnation,
While my blind dust sleeps on—
Thou shalt be dead when I waken ecstatic!
Thy sun-given arch of glory prismatic
Fade before my crown!

XIV.

When the earth's jewel-kin cease from their shining,
Perished the light over valley and river,
Thou shalt be silent, oh, silent forever,
Ere my long pæan hath scarce had beginning!
Around the song-swept Shrine
No hint of thy littleness ever shall wander,
Impressive, jubilant thunders, far grander,
Fall from lips divine!

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